What is claimed is:

1.   A moving picture coding method which performs coding by dividing a moving picture into one base layer and at least one enhancement layer, comprising:

    an extracting step of extracting the degree of importance of each area of the moving picture; and

    an assigning step of assigning coded data of each area to the enhancement layers in descending order of the degree of importance of the areas.

2.   The moving picture coding method according to claim 1, wherein the area having the highest degree of importance is regarded as an important area and the degree of importance is decreased from said important area toward the neighboring area.

3.   The moving picture coding method according to claim 1, wherein the degree of importance is extracted by detecting a face area or moving object in the moving picture.

4.   The moving picture coding method according to claim 2, wherein the degree of importance is further increased for the area inside the important area where there is a large residual value between the base layer decoded moving picture and the original moving picture.

5.   The moving picture coding method according to claim 1, wherein in said assigning step, a shift value is set according to the degree of importance, a bit shift is performed on the coded data of each area by the

5   corresponding shift value and the coded data of each area is assigned to the enhancement layer.

6.   The moving picture coding method according to claim 5, wherein a greater shift value is set as the degree

10   of importance increases.

7.   A moving picture transmission method which carries out coding and transfer of a moving picture using the moving picture coding method according to claim 1

15   synchronized with each other.

8.   A moving picture coding apparatus comprising:
     a picture input section that inputs an original moving picture;

20   a base layer coding section that extracts one base layer from said original moving picture and codes the base layer;
     a base layer decoding section that decodes the base layer coded by said base layer coding section and

25   reconstructs the base layer;
     a residual picture generation section that generates a residual picture between the reconstructed picture reconstructed by said base layer decoding section

and said original moving picture;

an important area detection section that detects an important area from said original moving picture;

a gradual shift map generation section that sets

5   bit shift values gradually according to the degree of importance of the important area extracted by said important area detection section;

a DCT section that DCT-transforms the residual picture generated by said residual picture generation

10 section;

a bit shift section that bit-shifts the DCT coefficient obtained by said DCT section by the bit shift value obtained by said gradual shift map generation section;

15 a bit plane VLC section that performs VLC processing for each bit plane bit-shifted by said bit shift section; and

an enhancement layer division section that divides the moving picture stream VLC-processed by said bit plane

20 VLC section as an enhancement layer into at least one portion.

9.   A program for causing a computer to execute the moving picture coding method according to claim 1.

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